Ranking Digital Rights Methodology Development Process
As of February 13, 2015

Rigorous research, stakeholder consultation, and transparency about the methodology development process are vital if a ranking is to be credible, rigorous, and effective. The first public ranking, now planned for release in late 2015, will be the product of more than two years of research, consultation, and testing. This document describes that process, providing links to more materials and resources on the Ranking Digital Rights project website.

Note that the project is being carried out in two phases.
https://rankingdigitalrights.org/project-documents/work-plan/

Phase 1 (for public launch in 2015) focuses on global Internet and telecommunications companies, and Phase 2 (for public launch in 2016) focuses on software, device, and networking equipment companies. The methodology development process described below focuses on Phase 1. Research for methodology development for Phase 2 is ongoing.

Theory and strategy: For more about the core concepts related to business and human rights, ICT and human rights, and the project's "theory of change," please see our Theory and Strategy overview:
https://rankingdigitalrights.org/project-documents/theory-and-strategy/
We also carried out research on best practices for corporate rankings in general.
https://rankingdigitalrights.org/project-documents/elements/

Consultations: Two stakeholder meetings in late 2012 and Spring of 2013 helped shape the ranking's focus and framed research questions we needed to answer before developing the methodology.
https://rankingdigitalrights.org/event-summaries/oct-2012-workshop-summary/
https://rankingdigitalrights.org/event-summaries/april-2013-workshop/
The project team has continued to consult with stakeholders at a range of conferences as well as in smaller bilateral or private group meetings.
https://rankingdigitalrights.org/event-summaries/

Case study research: Initial case study research conducted in the second half of 2013 and early 2014 helped us answer key questions before starting to draft the methodology.
https://rankingdigitalrights.org/project-documents/case-study-research/
Our Phase 1 Case Study Research report describes what we learned from that research, followed by summaries of each case study's findings and recommendations.
https://rankingdigitalrights.org/project-documents/phase-1-case-study-research/

Human Rights risk scenarios: Parallel to the case study research we carried out consultations with civil society groups, activists, and journalists on a set of scenarios describing risks that they may face when using ICTs. Our Human Rights Risk Scenarios document raises key questions about company policies and practices in relation to those user risks. https://rankingdigitalrights.org/project-documents/risk-scenarios/

Methodology drafting and consultation: As of February 2015 the Phase 1 methodology has undergone three iterations.
1. **Phase 1 Draft Methodology v1** (February 2014): This is the first iteration of RDR's methodology, based on case study research and stakeholder consultation. https://rankingdigitalrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/rdrmethodologyfeb28.pdf

2. **Phase 1 Draft Methodology v2** (May 2014): This is the second iteration of RDR's methodology. We incorporated insights from our case study research as well as feedback from a variety of stakeholders to create this version. We invited stakeholders and the public to comment on this version. https://rankingdigitalrights.org/project-documents/phase-1-draft-methodology-v2/

3. **Phase 1 Pilot Methodology** (October 2014): This is the third iteration of RDR's methodology. We updated the methodology based on feedback we received on version two. This is the methodology tested in the Phase 1 pilot. https://rankingdigitalrights.org/project-documents/phase-1-pilot-methodology/

Pilot study: In October 2014 in partnership with Sustainalytics we launched a Pilot Study, testing the Phase 1 methodology on 12 companies. The research was completed in January 2015. As of mid-February a preliminary report on the lessons learned from the pilot had been drafted. Following consultations with stakeholders on the draft, a revised version of the pilot study report will be published in March 2015.
https://rankingdigitalrights.org/2014/10/06/phase-1-pilot-study-launched/
About Sustainalytics: http://www.sustainalytics.com/

About Ranking Digital Rights

Ranking Digital Rights is a project hosted by New America's Open Technology Institute focused on developing a system to assess, compare, and publicly rank the world's most powerful ICT companies on free expression and privacy criteria. For more about the project please visit www.rankingdigitalrights.org.

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